

# Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

## *A Gathering of Dark Clouds: The United States and Japan, 1940-1941*

*“Cordell Hull: In all my fifty years of public service, I have never seen a document so crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions, on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any government on this planet was capable of uttering them.*

*Ambassador Nomura: [pleading] Mr. Hull...*

*Cordell Hull: [wearily] Go!”*

**Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970)**

Standard: I. Culture  
II. Time, Continuity, and Change  
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions  
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance  
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption  
IX. Global Connections  
X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9-12

Objectives: The student will:

- Analyze the path to war by the United States and Japan
- Determine the diplomatic measures taken prior to war in the Pacific
- Develop dialogue based on diplomatic documents
- Comprehend actions taken by key government officials in the United States and Japan

Time: 2 class periods

Materials: Documents: **1940** *Japan Protests Export Ban*  
**1940** *Unsatisfactory Relations*  
**1941** *A Situation of Extraordinary Importance*  
**1941** *The Approach of War (two telegrams)*  
**1941** *A Sudden Meeting*  
**1941** *The Fourteen Point Message*  
**1941** *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*  
**1941** *The United States Declares War*

Resources: *A Gathering of Dark Clouds: Negotiating Peace*  
*Collage of Key Players*

Exercises: **Group A:**  
*A Diplomatic Conversation—Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura and Special Envoy Saburo Kurusu*  
**Group B:**  
*A Diplomatic Conversation—President Roosevelt & Emperor Hirohito*  
**Group C:**  
*A Diplomatic Conversation— Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Ambassador Kensuke Horinouchi*  
*A Call to War*

Access to the audio of FDR's speech, *A Day which will Live in Infamy*

Procedures:

*Setting up the Activity*

1. Introduce students to the activity by distributing the resource, *A Gathering of Dark Clouds: Negotiating Peace?*
2. Explain that they will attempt the task of negotiating between the United States and Japan by portraying the key players described in the Resource.
3. Divide the class into groups of 4–5 students. Distribute the documents as listed below. Some groups may overlap topics if the class is larger. The groups working on the same collection of documents will have time to collaborate.
4. Assign information for Group D to only one group of students. Their assignment is different from the others and does not need multiple creations.
  - Group A.** *Japan Protests Export Ban*  
*Unsatisfactory Relations*
  - Group B.** *A Situation of Extraordinary Importance*
  - Group C.** *The Approach of War* (2 telegrams)  
*A Sudden Meeting*  
*The Fourteen Part Message*
  - Group D.** *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*  
*The United States Declares War*

*Activity*

1. Provide the *Diplomatic Conversation* exercises, to the matching groups. Group D should receive the exercise, *A Call to War*.
2. Project the resource, *Collage of Key Players*, so that students can view the people they are portraying.
3. Have Group A. create the statements and responses that their key players would have said. Use the documents to create the appropriate dialogues.
4. Group B. must create a more "imaginative" dialogue. Because of the traditional nature of Japanese society, President Roosevelt probably would not have received a direct reply from Emperor Hirohito, even if there had been time to do so before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Any reply, if made, would have come from a member of the government. Therefore, Group B. should identify key comments made by FDR and leave Emperor Hirohito's column blank.
5. Group C. has a short conversation from which to create dialogue, since the Japanese diplomats left Secretary Hull's office quickly after Hull read

only part of the *Fourteen Part Message* that they had delivered. His famous comment about the document is included in *A Sudden Meeting*. Before they leave, have Secretary Hull read a few of the statements from the *Fourteen Part Message* and have the Japanese Ambassador and Envoy respond each time, "Mr. Hull. . ." in a pleading tone. Mr. Hull's last comment will be "Go!" The Ambassador and Envoy will exit without additional comment.

Secretary Hull will continue to list the reasons for war provided by the Japanese, sighing and shaking his head. He realizes that further diplomacy is futile. (Students should identify and complete the list of reasons for war given by Japan in the *Fourteen Part Message*.)

**6.** Group D has a unique assignment. These students will not create a dialog, but instead will set the stage for FDR's famous address to Congress on December 8, 1941, and the subsequent Declaration of War by Congress. This group will present after the other groups have had their diplomatic "conversations." They will need online access to hear FDR's Pearl Harbor Speech.

### *Presenting Information*

- 1.** If the teacher created more than one group of A, B, or C, have the matching letters combine as a large group.
- 2.** Each group should decide which members will read selected items of dialogue. Divide the comments and responses so that all students, as they were originally paired, will speak as their characters.
- 3.** Have Groups A, B, and C present their information. Group B should explain why Emperor Hirohito, sitting on his Chrysanthemum Throne in Japan (and a student should do this!), is not joining in the dialogue. Group C should explain, after their brief dialogue, why they are presenting the remainder of the *Fourteen Part Message* as a list. The students should follow presentation instructions given in Activity, #5 (above.)
- 6.** Once the conversations and explanations are complete, have Group D present their information. Instructions are provided with exercise, "A Call to War."
- 7.** The teacher should follow the group presentations with a de-briefing of the content presented.
- 8.** Have students address this prompt from a U.S. perspective as a homework assignment:

*"The war with Japan was inevitable."*